

Colby Says His Dismissal as C.I.A. Chief Arose From His

By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

William E. Colby says in a memoir to be published in May that he believes President Ford removed him as Director of Central Intelligence in late 1975 because he chose not "to stonewall" but to cooperate with the Congressional and executive inquiries that year into wrongdoing by the Central Intelligence Agency.

"To say the very least, most of the White House staff and, for that matter, much of the intelligence community, were unenthusiastic about what I was doing," Mr. Colby writes in "Honorables Men: My Life in the CIA," to be published by Simon and Schuster.

Among those who directly expressed concern to him, Mr. Colby writes, were Henry A. Kissinger, then Secretary of State; Brent Scowcroft, then the head of the National Security Council, and Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, who at the time was chairman of a Presidential appointed executive commission that was investigating alleged C.I.A. abuses.

Mr. Rockefeller denied, in a statement issued late yesterday through an aide, that he had ever asked Mr. Colby to obstruct the commission's inquiry.

Mr. Colby's subsequent dismissal as Director of Intelligence was publicly described as being essential to a reorganization of the national security structure, but according to Mr. Colby, that was not the main reason: "I believe I was fired because of the way I went about dealing with the C.I.A.'s crisis. My approach, pragmatically and philosophically, was in conflict with that of the President and his principal advisers."

Portions of Mr. Colby's book were provided by Simon and Schuster to a New York Times reporter today after Newsweek magazine, in its current issue, published some details in a column.

Richard E. Snyder, president of the publishing house, deplored in an interview what he characterized as a "front-page mentality" that was making it difficult to circulate advance proofs of works such as Mr. Colby's "This is not hard news," Mr. Snyder said. "Someone breaking the embargo can't say it's the public's right to know."

By printing without permission, the publisher said, "you are denying a person's right to a fair gain."

Mr. Colby, who submitted the manuscript to the C.I.A. for clearance, recounts his career as a C.I.A. operative in Scandinavia, in Italy and in Vietnam, where he later became director of the pacification effort. But much of the book deals with what Mr. Colby calls "The Year of Intelligence," the 12-month period after the December 1974 publica-



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William E. Colby

tion of an article in The New York Times describing the C.I.A.'s domestic spying.

Mr. Colby was convinced, he writes, that the initial report in The Times contained "distortions and exaggerations" that could be countered only by attempting "to cooperate with the investigations and try to educate the Congress, press, and public, as well as I could, about American intelligence."

Within a few days, Mr. Colby writes, he was excluded from the day-to-day discussions among President Ford, Secretary Kissinger and key White House advisers over how to handle the allegations reported in The Times.

"Their preferred approach, bluntly put," he writes, "would have been to stonewall, to disclose as little as they could get away with, and to cry havoc to the national security about what they couldn't deny—in short, the exact opposite of mine."

Mr. Colby describes the White House's approach this way:

"The White House decided to try to contain the crisis by forming a blue-ribbon commission to investigate. Soon after my first testimony before this commission, chaired by Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, he drew me into his office in the Executive Office Building and said in his most charming manner, 'Bill, do

you really have to present all this material to us?'"

"And at one of our private meetings to discuss intelligence activities, after I had become a regular performer before the Senate Select Committee, Kissinger, in a sarcastically teasing reference to my Catholicism, cracked, 'Bill, you know what you do when you go up to the Hill? You go to confession.'"

"Snowcroft, with his Air Force background and fierce loyalty to the Presidential command structure, didn't try to be witty about it; he flatly said I should refuse to reply to the questions the Congress was asking."

The Rockefeller statement yesterday said, "Because the President had limited the commission's investigation to questions relating to the domestic activities of the C.I.A., as chairman I endeavored at all times to keep the focus of the investigation on the designed assignment."

"Accordingly," the statement added, "I sought to avoid the commission's being drawn into issues that were beyond its assignment."

Later in his memoir, however, Mr. Colby writes that of all the commission members, only Erwin Griswold, the former Solicitor General and former dean of Harvard Law School, "was anything that could be called aggressive in his questioning of me."

As for his brief talk with Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Colby writes: "I got the message quite unmistakably, and I didn't like it."

"The Vice President of the United

States was letting me know that he didn't approve of my approach to the C.I.A.'s troubles, that he would much prefer me to take the traditional stance of fending off investigations by drawing the cloak of secrecy around the Agency in the name of national security."

In response to Mr. Rockefeller, Mr. Colby writes, "I mumbled something appropriate."

Despite such comments and the pressures that led to President Ford's decision late in the year to dismiss him, Mr. Colby writes: "I do not now, nor did I then, regret what I did. I remain more convinced than ever that not only was it the right way but it was the only way."

Mr. Colby's thesis, restated throughout the memoir in various forms, is that the C.I.A. would gain the public's support and good will only if it became "an integral part of our democratic process, subject to our system of checks and balances among the Executive and Congress and the Judiciary."

In Mr. Colby's view, his decision to be responsive to the investigating groups proved correct when those groups concluded in their public reports that, as the Rockefeller Commission said, "the great majority of the C.I.A.'s activities comply with statutory authority."

But the television report by Daniel Schorr of CBS that the C.I.A. had engaged in foreign assassination attempts ended any chance for balanced treatment by the press, Mr. Colby writes. "A hysteria

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seize Washington," he writes; "sensation came to rule the day."

Elsewhere in his memoirs, however, Mr. Colby candidly writes about events that raise profound questions about his inability, as a high-level C.I.A. official, to control agency activities and the inability of the various investigating groups to learn all there is to know about any C.I.A. operation or activity.

For example, Mr. Colby writes that, upon his return from a Vietnam assignment to C.I.A. headquarters in 1972, he quickly became aware of the illegal C.I.A. domestic spying program, which had the code name Chaos.

A number of C.I.A. officers, he writes, "were all aware that a most secret project was lodged in that most secret of agency crannies, the Counterintelligence Staff, and that it had a great deal to do with the antiwar movement." He went on, "And the main concern on the part of these young agency employees was whether the C.I.A. was engaged in an activity that was clearly outside its proper charter—domestic intelligence."

After an investigation led by himself, Mr. Colby writes, Richard Helms, then the Director of Central Intelligence, ordered the Counterintelligence Staff to turn Chaos away from the antiwar movement to the threat of international terrorism.

"It wasn't until more than a year later that I realized that Helms's direction as to the new priority was considered by a few of those devoted to Chaos to be a

cover story—a publicly acceptable explanation of their work while they continued to seek counterintelligence targets within American domestic dissent," Mr. Colby writes.

But Mr. Colby adds that he did nothing about it. "By the time I learned of this," he says, "I was already in the process of dismantling Chaos, so I did not try to ascertain how this misconstruction of Helms's instructions might have been reflected in actual operations."

Mr. Colby also dealt with the C.I.A.'s decision not to send its own evidence of illegal domestic spying to the Justice Department for possible prosecution.

Mr. Colby writes that he was questioned by Lawrence Silberman, then the Acting Attorney General, shortly after The Times's publication of the initial domestic spying articles. He told Mr. Silberman, he says, that The Times had apparently obtained some details from an internal list of alleged incidents of domestic wrongdoing, which had been compiled during the Watergate crisis in 1973 but had not been turned over to the Justice Department.

Mr. Silberman declared, he writes, that Mr. Colby "was obliged to turn such evidence over to the public authorities."

"In withholding that evidence for a year and a half, Bill," Mr. Colby quotes Mr. Silberman as saying, "you may have committed a crime yourself."

Mr. Colby writes that the thought of reporting the matter to the Justice Department "never crossed my mind."